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Testimony in Support of HB 5293

Hello, my name is Jennifer Gottlieb Elazhari a Bethany resident and member of the State Bar since 2005. **I am writing to urge you to forward this bill, HB 5293** to vote and pass it, so that our state can join the many countries, states, and municipalities worldwide¹ where it is not lawful to confine and torment non-human beings in circuses, subjecting them to a life of endless torture simply for having been born of the wrong species, and without power.

The time of debating whether non-human beings have souls, have rights to live their life according to their nature, have the right not to be treated as inanimate objects, tormented and degraded for entertainment is long gone. The justification for such actions has always been that animals lack intelligence and are unable to love. If this is true, how do we explain why emotional support animals for humans are so widely used that government agencies accept them as a valid basis for a reasonable accommodation under the American with Disabilities Act? Doctors actually prescribe the love of animals as healing medicine for us yet we still question that it exists?

We know the truth is that animals, while they do not talk as we do, have intelligence, sentience, deep emotional lives and a need to love and be loved that is perhaps even stronger than humans. Elephants have brains many times larger than humans. They live in herds where they cooperate and help each other, encourage each other, support the young of herd mates, change their behavior to adapt to changing conditions based on memories of past events like droughts, play happily when life is good and grieve when their friends and families pass away. The Sheldrick Wildlife Sanctuary in Kenya that cares for orphaned elephants learned how much the orphans love their caretaker. They changed their practice of having one caretaker and now rotate caretakers after they found that an orphaned elephant died when the caretaker it loved took a trip out of town for several days and the orphan's emotional distress was so great that it died.

Elephants suffer trauma and loss in the same manner that we do. As with humans, Elephants and other animals go insane when deprived of appropriate sensory stimulation and relationships as circus animals and human prisoners. Each one of us here today derives a great deal of our identity from our roles and relationships in our own societies. We deserve a chance to be human children, mothers, sisters and lawmakers who have a role to play in a group. No one of us deserves to be caged alone for our lifetime and gawked at simply for being born as humans and the animals in circuses do not deserve this either.

If understanding and exhibiting love is the measure of a being, as Jesus indicated it was, then perhaps animals may be higher than humans. Many of us have a similar story to my memory of my German Shepard Flower, who lived with me when I was young. Flower was so devoted to

her family that when she was old and arthritic, we had to lock her in the house when we went on walks as she would always follow us no matter how painful it was for her to walk. While so many of us have known the complete love of a dog, we accept it as commonplace that human fathers abandon their children in large numbers and human families warehouse and ignore weak members such as the elderly rather than protecting them. There are documented instances of animals protecting humans in the wild from predators. Do any among us really believe that animals are inanimate pieces of property whose lives should be taken from them for our entertainment?

Because circuses are constantly traveling from city to city, animals are forced to spend most of their lives in the cramped, barren cages where they have only enough room to stand and turn around. Most animals are allowed out of their cages only during the short periods when they must perform. Elephants are kept in leg shackles that prevent them from taking more than one step in any direction. Herd animals that are from species with complex social systems are deprived of any natural life. Unlike prisoners who are given a sentence in jail due to having committed a crime, these creatures have committed no crime other than being born as the species they are and having no power.

They are interminably confined leading to serious emotional distress as evidenced by un-natural forms of behavior such as repeated head-bobbing, swaying, and pacing.

The tricks that animals are forced to perform—such as when bears balance on balls, apes ride motorcycles, and elephants stand on two legs—are physically uncomfortable and behaviorally unnatural. While they are deprived of all that makes sense to them given their nature, their lives are full of things that make no sense to them, such as these tricks, which they would not do if they were not tortured into submission.

Cole Bros. Circus, formerly known as “Clyde Beatty–Cole Bros. Circus,” has been cited repeatedly by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) for animal welfare violations. According to congressional testimony given by former Beatty-Cole elephant keeper Tom Rider, “[I]n White Plains, N.Y., when Pete did not perform her act properly, she was taken to the tent and laid down, and five trainers beat her with bullhooks.” Rider also told officials that “[a]fter my three years working with elephants in the circus, I can tell you that they live in confinement and they are beaten all the time when they don’t perform properly.”²

Former Ringling Bros. employees reported similar cases in their circus.

As Florida police officer Blayne Doyle—who shot 47 rounds into Janet, an elephant who ran amok with three children on her back at the Great American Circus in Palm Bay—noted, “I think these elephants are trying to tell us that zoos and circuses are not what God created them for ... but we have not been listening.”³

As lawmakers, it is your responsibility to protect the powerless. I have taken the time to appeal to you as duty, as I, like you, have been blessed with a voice that humans can hear. Please use your voice and your power to protect the voiceless who have much to communicate and much to feel and suffer but not only not the words of humans and the power that wields.

¹ **Places with Restrictions and Bans:** Austria; Belgium; Bolivia; Bosnia-Herzegovina; Bulgaria; Colombia; Costa Rica; Croatia; Cyprus; Czech Republic; Denmark; Ecuador; England; El Salvador; Estonia; Finland; Greece; Guatemala; Honduras; Hungary; India; Iran; Ireland; Israel; Italy; Latvia; Lebanon; Macedonia; Malta; Mexico; Netherlands; Norway; Panama; Paraguay; Peru; Poland; Portugal; Romania; Scotland; Serbia; Singapore; Slovenia; Sweden; Taiwan; Arkansas; Eureka Springs; California; Colorado: Boulder, Loveland, Timnath; Connecticut: Bridgeport, Stamford; Florida: Citrus County, Destin, Hallandale Beach, Hollywood, Margate, Mary Esther, Miami Beach, Okaloosa County, Panama City, Pompano Beach, Sebring; Georgia: Baldwin County, Coweta County, Fulton County, Union City; Hawaii: Statewide ban on importing dangerous wild animals for circuses or carnivals; Maui County; Idaho: Blaine County, Ketchum; Illinois: Statewide ban on the use of elephants in traveling shows; Indiana: Beech Grove, Bloomington, Munster, Whiting; Iowa: Ames, Burlington, Roland; Kansas: Olathe, Wyandotte County; Kentucky: Grant County, Kenton County, Louisville; Maine: Bar Harbor, Portland; Maryland: Montgomery County; Massachusetts: Braintree, Cambridge, Pittsfield, Plymouth, Provincetown, Quincy, Revere, Somerville, Weymouth; Michigan: St Clair Shores; Minnesota: Minneapolis; Mississippi: Statewide ban on temporary exhibits allowing public contact with most wild animals; Biloxi, Brandon, Clinton, Crystal Springs, D'Iberville, Flowood, Gulfport, Horn Lake, Jackson, Meridian, Ridgeland, Southaven, West Point; Missouri: Richmond; Montana: Missoula; Nebraska: Bellevue; New Jersey: Statewide ban on the use of wild animals in traveling shows; Bergen County, Clifton, Cumberland County, Hudson County Jersey City, Passaic County, Vineland; New Mexico: Las Cruces, Santa Fe; New York: Statewide ban on the use of elephants in entertainment acts, statewide ban on public contact with big cats and with endangered or threatened species, including elephant rides; East Hampton, Greenburgh, New York City, Southampton, and Wallkill; North Carolina: Asheville, Chapel Hill, Orange County; Ohio: Delaware; Oklahoma: El Reno, Mustang; Oregon: Benton County, Clatsop County, Multnomah County; Pennsylvania: Pittsburgh; Rhode Island: Statewide ban on the use of bullhooks or other similar pain inflicting devices on elephants; South Carolina: Aiken County, Edgefield County, Spartanburg; Tennessee: Germantown, Oliver Springs; Texas: Aransas Pass, Austin, Corpus Christi, Denton, Killeen, Marion, Nolanville; Utah: Helper, Huntington, Layton City; Vermont: Burlington; Virginia: Charlottesville, Fairfax, King George County, Manassas, Manassas Park, Prince William County, Richmond, Salem, Spotsylvania County; Washington: Darrington, Port Townsend, Redmond, Snohomish, Spokane; Wisconsin: Dane County

²Tom Rider, testimony, legislative hearing on H.R. 2929, 13 June 2000.

³Louis Sahagun, "Elephants Pose Giant Dangers," *Los Angeles Times* 11 Oct. 1994.